

April 1 – April 15, 2009

HEALTH

Afghanistan Celebrates World TB Day:

March 24 marked World TB Day 2009, an important opportunity to raise awareness about the global fight against tuberculosis (TB). Tuberculosis is a major public health threat in Afghanistan, with approximately 30,000 new cases per year. Almost 70% of Afghanistan's reported cases are women, and without proper treatment, far too many Afghan citizens succumb to the disease.

To increase understanding about TB prevention and treatment, USAID, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and other members of the international Stop TB



School girls in Jawzjan Province hold signs that read "I am stopping TB." $\,$

PHOTO: LISAID/TR CAP

Partnership held events in schools across Afghanistan. 152,000 students took part in the day's celebrations, participating in quiz shows, local marches, and sessions with community health workers. They also received baseball caps and flags featuring the Stop TB Partnership slogan, *I am stopping TB*. Throughout the country, 6.2 million children learned how to prevent the spread of TB through print materials and mass media messages.

USAID supports Afghanistan's National Tuberculosis Program to stop the spread of TB and to treat diagnosed cases through the Directly Observed Therapy, Short Course (DOTS) methodology. USAID provides healthcare in 13 provinces throughout Afghanistan, including Badakhshan, Kandahar, and Paktika.



A billboard in Bamyan advises TB prevention methods. PHOTO: USAID/TB CAP

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Setting the Stage for Free and Fair Elections: As Afghanistan's August 2009 presidential elections draw closer, efforts are underway to register voters, ensuring that as many Afghan citizens as possible are able to express their preference for the next president. The Independent Election Commission (IEC) reports that over 4.4 million new voters have been registered as of March 15, with 38% being women. The voter registration campaign, however, is just one part of a comprehensive, USAID-supported effort to hold successful democratic elections in Afghanistan.

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Voter registration forms are prepared for scanning into the voter database.

PHOTO: USAID/STEP

Throughout February and March, USAID has worked to re-establish the Electoral Complaints Commission, a body that will increase accountability during the elections by providing a formal mechanism for reporting violations of electoral law. Additionally, voter education seminars reached participants such as university students and the Women's Solidarity Council. Finally, the IEC is now able to efficiently enter newly registered voters into the Voter Registration Database thanks to equipment and management support provided by USAID. Raising accountability, awareness, and technical capacity in the run-up to voting will play an essential role in ensuring transparency and fairness throughout the electoral process.

Moot Court Classrooms Dedicated at Kabul

University: Law students at Kabul University now have new opportunities for practical and interactive learning. On March 19, the university dedicated four renovated classrooms in its Law and Political Science and Sharia Faculties, which will enable students to apply their theoretical knowledge during mock trial exercises. Professor Hamidullah Amin, Chancellor of Kabul University, thanked USAID for its support and said that the new classrooms mean "progress for Kabul University, better lawyers for Afghanistan, and ultimately, restoration of the rule of law in our country."



A moot court classroom at Kabul University. PHOTO: USAID/ARoLP

The classrooms offer Afghanistan's future legal professionals the



Chancellor of Kabul University Hamidullah Amin and Justice of the Supreme Court Bahaudin Baha cut the ceremonial ribbon dedicating a new moot court classroom.

PHOTO: USAID/ARoLP

chance to develop their oral presentation and advocacy skills as they participate in simulated role-playing scenarios and moot court exercises. Each classroom is equipped with a computer, a digital projector and screen, and a whiteboard. The two moot court classrooms are furnished with a judge's bench, counsel tables, a dock, and a witness stand.



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ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE

Citizens Plant 1.2 Million Trees in Eastern

Afghanistan: Healthy forests provide many environmental benefits, as they prevent soil erosion, decrease air pollution and greenhouse gasses, and act as windbreak barriers to protect crops. In Afghanistan, where forests have suffered as a result of war and unsustainable cutting for firewood and building materials, replanting is essential to improving environmental conditions such as air and soil quality. To help restore Afghanistan's forests, USAID, in cooperation with regional departments of agriculture, has planted millions of trees throughout Afghanistan as part of a program to provide sustainable alternatives to poppy production.



Eucalyptus saplings are unloaded for distribution in Kunar Province.
PHOTO: USAID/ADP/E

On March 4, USAID planted 1,248,000 trees in Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, and Nuristan, adding to the nearly eight million trees that had already been planted. The campaign was successful due to the participation of 1,552 local families, who planted saplings such as eucalyptus, poplar, shisham, and lucina. All of the saplings were produced locally in 14 nurseries – including four women-owned nurseries – throughout the region. Ultimately, the trees will result in more fertile, productive land, enabling eastern Afghanistan's farmers to grow profitable, licit food crops – as well as to enjoy the health benefits of cleaner air.

"This campaign to plant more than a million forest trees is exceptional for the region," said horticulture expert Amanullah Atal. "Working together with the government, we are proud to build a greener region that will have benefits for years to come, and that shows our commitment to a more productive and environmentally sustainable future for Afghanistan."

INFRASTRUCTURE

Drilling Equipment Arrives at the Shibirghan Gas Fields: Afghanistan's energy needs significantly outweigh its domestic production. Today, only 10-12% of Afghan citizens have access to electricity, and the country needs an influx of energy resources and infrastructure to provide reliable power throughout the country. In addition to exploiting domestic hydropower and importing energy from neighboring countries, Afghanistan also possesses another potential power source – the Shibirghan gas fields.



A convoy of 36 trucks brought needed drilling equipment to Shibirghan.

PHOTO: USAID/IRP



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The Shibirghan gas fields hold potentially significant reserves of clean-burning natural gas, but years of war and lack of resources have prevented continued exploration and development. In cooperation with the Afghan Ministry of Mines, USAID recently launched an initiative to test the fields' wells to determine whether they contain enough gas to fuel a 100-megawatt electrical power plant and a fertilizer production plant. The plants would benefit Afghans greatly through the clean power produced and new jobs created both directly and indirectly through increased electricity to factories and businesses.

In March 2009, a 36-truck convoy drove over 3,000 km from Anatolia, Turkey to bring necessary drilling equipment to the gas fields in the northern province of Jawzjan. The trucks carried 550 tons of machinery, which will be used to test the viability of Afghanistan's natural gas to produce electricity at the proposed power plant. While the journey was logistically daunting, the arrival of the machinery signals progress in the effort to provide more electricity to Afghanistan's people.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM

Construction Begins on Lashkar Gah Electrical Substation: In late March, USAID and the Afghan Ministry of Energy and Water began constructing a new electrical substation in Lashkar Gah, Hilmand Province. The substation will convert the voltage and current of energy produced by the hydropower plant at Kajaki Dam, enabling its use in homes and businesses. With significant amounts of additional Kajaki-generated electricity expected to flow in 2009, the new substation will increase the capacity and reliability of the current substation, which was installed in the mid-1970s. When completed, the new substation will improve the



Kajaki Dam in Hilmand Province. PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

Government of Afghanistan's ability to deliver reliable electricity to residents throughout southern Afghanistan.